

Father Remarked That It Wasn't a Very Good Lesson for Her That It Should Have Turned Out That Way.

THERE is in the world an occasional gay, care-free person who seems to be carried, not only to the skies, but through life itself, on flowery beds of ease. Such a rare avis was Marcia Mason. Katherine's nature was of a sweet seriousness. Eleanor, although merry-hearted, was studious. Marcia was neither of these. If she was serious, she concealed it admirably. Her studying was usually a very hasty procedure, conducted on the way down a corridor to her recitation room. She had a four-sieve mind, warranted to hold a great deal of information for at least twenty minutes.

"I always volunteer during the first part of the recitation while the going's good," she merrily told at home, "then I sit in silence, not so conspicuous when the road gets rough."

Things seemed to come Marcia's way.

"I was born under a lucky star," she often told the family. And the family almost believed it.

In appearance she was undeniably lovely, and as one of her aunts said, "as likable as she was lovable." No one could say she was lazy about the house. She simply made a wise and far-sighted choice of household tasks. Soon after she had enthusiastically offered to shell the peas, it became apparent to the other girls that the pea-shelling operation carried on under the breeze-swept grape arbor was greatly preferable to doing the dishes in the hot kitchen or making countless beds.

MARCIA certainly has the happy faculty of slipping through life easily. Mother would sometimes say in exasperation to father, "Well, mother, I don't know any one in the family that makes more friends," father would remind her, "Which brings us to Father and Mother Mason's attitude toward and about their children. For twenty-six years they had argued over them, but always when they were alone. Toward the children they presented a solid front. If either chose to receive, father either assisted at the ceremony or kept silent. And vice versa. It is a fine old policy. It has been effective since the days of Abraham and Sarah."

When they were alone, however, they argued it out. And the strange part is that neither one always took the same side. If mother found fault with some characteristic of her offspring, father immediately made excuses for it. If father offered the complaint, mother flew to her child's defense like a mother bear.

In this instance father was right about Marcia's friends. Everybody liked her, the teachers and old people and children, and Hod Beason, who brought the coal, and Lizzie Beadle, the town dressmaker.

When Marcia went away to school it was as though a great deal of the sunshine of the Mason home had gone with her. When she returned for vacations, everything and every one, from the piano to Tillie, seemed to brighten at her coming. After all, the old world needs more of them—these people who turn to joyousness as the tides run to meet the moon.

Each time Marcia came home she had new tales to tell. And father and mother, who came to reprove, remained to laugh.

"Say, folks," she would begin, "I had to write a thesis on some form of lower animal life for old Prof. Briggs in zoology class, and what I know about zoology you could put in a spoon. So I wrote about a starfish—sort of from the fiction standpoint—and they told me old Prof. Briggs laughed till he nearly cried over the joys and sorrows of that little echinoderm—I guess it's an echinoderm. I got a grade of excellent, and all I know about a starfish to this day is that it has five points and wiggles."

"You can't go through life sidestepping that way, my girl," father suppressed a chuckle. "One of these days you'll bump up against something mighty serious and wish you'd applied yourself."

"Don't preach, father!" Marcia rubbed a pink and white cheek against father's graying hair. "I haven't time to come to the fact that I'm sentimental. Tommy—I'll find a way. And soft-hearted old father hoped it was true."

Father and Mother Mason held the sensible view that each of the girls should take up some practical training. So Marcia chose a course in special primary teaching for her senior year.

"How'd you happen to choose primary?" Katherine wanted to know.

"Oh, primary hours are shortest of all, and who wants to stay in a schoolroom any longer than he has to?" Marcia was smiling at the thought. "And when you come to think about it—who does?"

During that senior year Marcia had a great many experiences to relate to the family.

"In October we taught those little Comanches about squirrels and Columbus and other adventures of gentlemen," she told the folks at Thanksgiving. "Primary teachers are awful larks," she stated blandly. "Imagine! This whole month has been rainy, and we've smiled our mall-order primary smiles and made those youngsters grin 'Pit-a-pat, see the lovely raindrops. Just because it was supposed to have mutual relation to the 'distinguishing elements.'"

In spring vacation she summed up her work with: "We had a perfect orgy of cherry trees and hatches and valentines in February—and I wish you could have seen the training school in March. We simply fell apart boxes and kites, and we fairly ate pussywillows. This month we've painted millions of wild-looking rabbits. You'd die to see them—their heads all run down and mix up so nicely with their wings. It's a great life," she added blithely.

and was waiting by the down-town station for the college car. As it stopped a sorority sister came down the steps. "He's in there," she whispered. "Capitol City superintendent—come for teachers."

"Where?"

"There—half way down—right-hand side."

He looked just as Marcia would have expected him to look—heavy, distinguished, gray-haired, with a Van Dyke beard. She sat down behind him and whispered to his broad back a foolish little jargon:

"Eeny meeny miny mo, Please, kind sir, choose me to go."

Across the aisle from the great man sat Mrs. Hastings, the college doctor's wife. A strange young man was with her. From occasional glimpses of his good-looking profile, Marcia decided that he bore a faint resemblance to Mrs. Hastings. There was something about him she liked, his square jaw and alert manner and a distinct air of sophistication that none of the college boys had yet acquired.

The car stopped at the entrance to the campus and let out its load. As Marcia was about to pass Mrs. Hastings and the strange young man, the former said, "Oh, Miss Mason, are you in a hurry?" As there was merely a small matter of an English literature class due then, Miss Mason assured Mrs. Hastings she was not at all in haste.

"Could you show my brother around a little? My brother, Mr. Wheeler, Miss Mason. . . . I would go with him myself, but I told Hannah if the baby needed me, to put a red cloth in the window, and there it is!" She pointed excitedly to her home across from the campus. She was breathless, and anxious to get away.

"My sister," Mr. Wheeler said, "missed her calling. She would have made an excellent major general or park policeman."

MARCIA laughed again. She still liked him. Mr. Wheeler looked down at his appointed guardian. She wore an immaculate white suit with an audaciously green silk sweater and cap. The V-shaped neck of her blouse set off the lovely contour of her face. By way of completing a very satisfactory picture there was a bunch of dewy-sweet violets in her belt.

"Do you happen by any chance," Mr. Wheeler asked, "to be the Miss Mason who is Keith Baldridge's fiancée?"

"No, indeed," Miss Mason said, more emphatically than was necessary, for it wasn't at all disgraceful to be engaged to Keith Baldridge. "That's my sister Katherine. I'm Marcia. And you know Keith?"

"Like David knew Jonathan."

They crossed the green sloping campus, sweet-smelling from its recent mowing. There was some conversation relative to their mutual interest in Keith Baldridge, and then Marcia said glibly:

"You see before you the new Science Hall. It is thirty-seven stories high, a mile square and cost seventy million dollars. The roof of the new dormitory may be seen through the trees. Out beyond the domestic science building is the amphitheater and beyond the amphitheater—lies Italy."

They had come to a little rustic bridge across a miniature creek. Neither one made a move to walk on. In fact, to be explicit, they sat down on the low railing.

"As for the training school," Marcia continued, "I wouldn't voluntarily take you there. It's the place where you abandon hope all ye who enter here."

"You teach there?"

"I do." She looked at her wrist watch. "And in fifty minutes I'm to teach before the superintendent of the Capitol City schools. If I haven't time of flight. He was on the car. Did you see him—a big husky Vanduyker?" Mr. Wheeler had noticed him.

"I want to make a professional hit with him," Marcia went on confidentially. "I've simply got to teach in Capitol City next year. I love a city. I want to walk in the crowds and eat at tea rooms. I want to go to the theater and sit in a box."

Mr. Wheeler looked judicially, appraisingly, at her. "I don't believe," he said soberly, "it would injure the looks of the box."

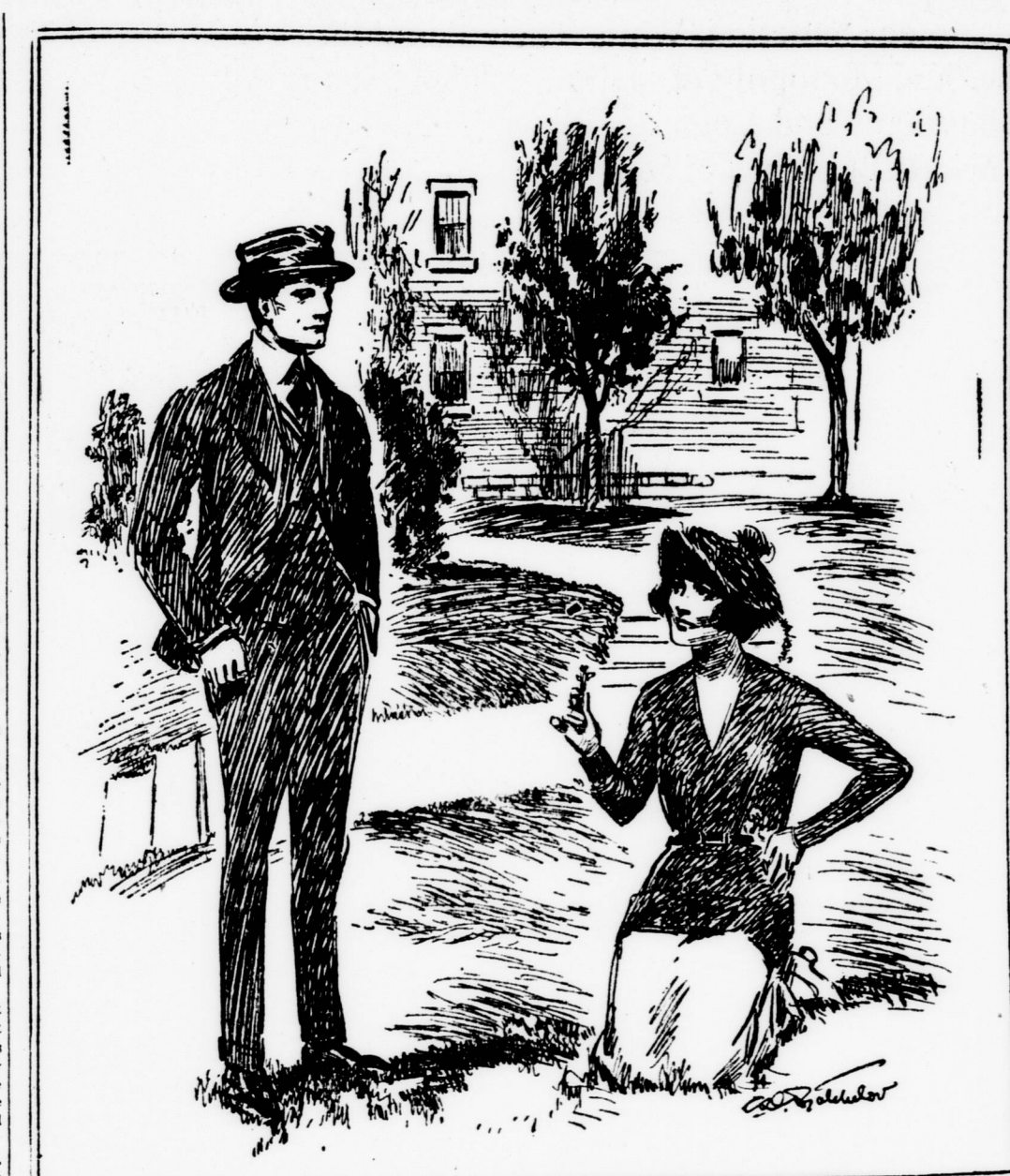
They both laughed. Marcia was enjoying herself immensely. He was like that for the whole time they were together, keen, clever, interesting. In comparison with him all the home boys and college boys of her numerous friendships faded quietly into a blurred masculine background. In the light of his clever repartee Marcia revealed. To his questioning she told him a great deal about herself. She described faculty members to the last comic detail. Mr. Wheeler enjoyed it, apparently, so she made fun of the training school for his benefit. She spared no one. She mocked the artificial manners of the student teachers and imitated the head of the department. His hearty, virile laugh was ample payment for her pains.

It lacked seven minutes of the hour. Marcia slipped down from the bridge back seat and into the quarry slave at night, scoured to his dungeon. Suddenly she clapped her hand to her throat in a characteristic gesture. "Oh, my goodness—I forgot—I have to get a whole violet plant with the roots on for my class. Oh, help me, will you?"

Mr. Wheeler sprang nimbly to his feet and together they searched over that particular part of the campus. Not a violet showed itself above the close-cropped lawn, nothing but bold-faced dandelions.

"Can't you—out that part out?" he suggested.

"You don't know Miss Rarick?" Marcia was genuinely distressed. "If you haven't everything your lesson plan calls for, she just looks at you and you shrink—and shrivel!"



"I HATE TO TAKE A DANDELION ROOT," SHE ANNOUNCED, "AND PASS IT OFF FOR A VIOLET."

of the hour. "I'll have to take a dandelion root," she announced, "and pass it off for a violet. They won't know the difference." Already her unquenchable spirits were rising. She borrowed Mr. Wheeler's knife and hastily dug up a dandelion. "See! I'll take two or three violet blossoms and leaves," she took them out of her belt—"attach them to the dandelion root, and wrap your handkerchief around the center as though it were damp—and there you are!"

"But, see here, they're nothing alike," he protested.

"Oh, we should worry!" said the blithe Miss Mason. "Thank you for helping me. You can come along if you want to, and see me teach. I'm frightened senseless, anyway, at the Vanduyker, so one or two more abled-bodied men won't matter."

Mr. Wheeler said he would be delighted to see the dandelion masquerading before the great man. So they hurried up the gravel driveway to the huge training-school building. Marcia pointed out the door where he was to go. "I have to go in another way," she explained; "the righteous from the wicked, you know."

THE main primary room was an awe-inspiring place. Eleven student teachers, notebooks in hand, sat by the side walls. Two critic teachers, notebooks in hand, sat by the rear walls. The head supervisor, notebook in hand, walked through the rows of desks to remind one of the day of judgment. The Capitol City superintendent was there, and two or three lesser lights. Marcia and nine small pupils held the center of the arena, after the manner of the early Christian martyrs. Her heart was beating suffocatingly, but she conducted a very creditable little reading class whose lesson was based on a violet plant that was much less modest than it should have been, owing to the fact that its pedal extremities, so to speak, had been grafted from a member of a family noted for its brazen forwardness.

Marcia was a model of the sweet young instructor. Only once did she throw a fleeting glance of roguishness at Mr. Wheeler, to see his mouth lift at the corners in the characteristic way she had liked.

The lesson was over. Every one breathed more naturally. The student teachers and visitors rose to go to chapel exercises. Marcia looked around for Mr. Wheeler, but did not see him. In the doorway she turned to look at the Capitol City superintendent, in the hope that he was discussing her with Miss Rarick. He was not so engaged. He was picking up from the floor a dandelion root, alias a violet.

The sight disturbed her somewhat, but she put the thought of it aside and went on to chapel. Near the auditorium she came upon a group of senior girls waiting for her. Some days at chapel exercises these girls sat on the front seat and acted virtuously. Some days they sat on the back seat and acted villainously. Today was apparently one of their pious days, for they filed decorously down the center aisle to the front seat and sang the opening hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy," as lustily as though they were the original vestal virgins.

The superintendent of the Capitol City schools, in all his dignity, sat up on the platform with the faculty. After the prayer and announcements President Wells arose and said: "We have with us today the superintendent of the largest school system in the state." Marcia looked at him and there she stood, so calm. How nice it would be, she thought, to be so undisturbed when you were about to address an audience. President Wells had ceased introducing him, but he did not stir from his chair. Instead, from the semi-gloom of the back row there was stepping out a tall, clean-cut, alert young man, with keen brown eyes and a strong chin.

a scarlet tide. From the chaotic jumble of her mind one naked, leering truth stood out: He was the superintendent of the Capitol City schools.

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ment over the unexpected arrival. Mother bustled about with happy moisture in her eyes, even while she took in the fact that Marcia had something on her mind. When they had finished supper it came out, just as mother knew it would. They were still sitting about the table—all but Junior, whose urgent business with Hunt Perkins and Shorty Marston always found his swallowing his last bites while on the way to the door.

Marcia told them all about it. She spared herself not at all. She had made a fool of herself, she said, and they might as well know it. "The



"THE MOON FLOODED HER SLIM, YOUTHFUL FIGURE, IN ITS SOFT, CLINGING GOWN."

ness and sincerity form the keystone of the teaching profession." He said a great deal more than that. He said it with fire and enthusiasm. He said he was there to choose teachers, high-grade teachers who had been faithful in their work. Carefulness, attention to details, were things that would be considered. But over and above these was the great fundamental question: What was the spirit of the teacher? What gifts of heart and soul as well as of mind did she come bearing to her task?

Marcia felt stunned, sick. She sat with miserable hot eyes fixed upon her lap. It was over at last. Chapel was over. President Wells and other faculty members had surrounded the girls. She attended two classes and got through a noisy boarding-house dinner. She wanted to go home. She wanted to see the family, especially mother—comfortable and comforting mother. Katherine would be home for the week end. She had written to that effect and also that Keith was coming for Sunday.

Marcia did not go to her afternoon classes and she hung a frank "Busy—Keep Out" sign on her door. Then she packed her grip and slipped down to the afternoon train.

At home the family was all excited

tear or two herself. "Marcia, there's something about you that makes me think of myself when I was a girl." Verily the poet was an inspired philosopher who remarked: Where can we better be Than in the bosom of our fam-i-lee? \* \* \* \* \*

ON Saturday it developed that there were enough young people home for the week end to get up a fair-sized picnic crowd. Cars were prohibited. Tommie Hickson was to bring a hayrack so they could all go together.

Mother thought it a fine plan and began hustling preparations for a basket supper. Tillie, whose emotion over Marcia had worn off, was disgruntled to have the Saturday work upset.

"You do spoil them girls, Molly," she volunteered. "Here's Kathie engaged to that Baldridge, and Marcia a grown woman, and even Eleanor getting along. Accordin' to my lights they ought to be hemlin' sheets and piecin' comforts instead a-galavantin' round to picnics."

"Tillie," mother said calmly, "a very wise poet once wrote about a rich old man who was robbed of all his wealth. The poem ends: 'They robbed him not of a golden shred. Of the childish dreams in his wise old head.'"

And "They're welcome to all things else," he said.

"When the robbers came to rob him," I figure you can buy sheets and comforts in any department store, but you can't buy dreams and memories of youth."

"Pray," Tillie had a special snort that flouted scorn. "You can't eat dreams nor cover your nakedness with memories."

"No," said mother placidly. "You can't. And when the girls are old, old ladies, the richest food won't feed their minds nor the thickest comforts bring warmth to their hearts." So they went on working together, side by side, two good old friends who would do anything for each other, but as far apart as the earth and the stars, as far apart as Martha and Mary—a piece of quilts and a weaver of dreams.

Tommie Hickson came with the hayrack and two horses, which seemed to share Tillie's scorn for the festivities. Marcia apparently brightened under the witching spell of the green woods, the pungent, wild smell of the crab-apple blossoms, the sweet, weird call of the mourning doves and the sheen of the silver river. Mother was right. No matter what Tillie said, the glow of her hand, the girls would always have memories left to them.

On the way home, after the manner of youth, the crowd sang. Marcia did not sing. She sat in the end of the hayrack and tried to reason it all out. Since yesterday she felt changed, subdued, unreal. She looked at the sun, calm face of the yellow-white moon. Why did that hour on the campus seem so set apart from other hours? It was like a little house in the woods. She had come upon it, rested in it for one hour—and gone on again. Must she forever be looking back at the little house by the side of the road?

THE crowd was unloaded at the various homes with merry good-nights. The Mason girls found that the rest of the family had gone up stairs for the night. There was a letter on the dining room mantel. Father had brought it home from the 5 o'clock mail. The letter was for Marcia. With fingers that trembled she tore it open and read it. Then she ran upstairs and called, "Polka! Everybody! Come here!"

Father and mother, fully dressed, came to their door. Tillie opened her door cautiously and put out her head. A striped kimono falling away from her long neck gave her the appearance of a curious giraffe. Junior, hearing the noise, came stumbling out of his room.

"Listen! It's from him." She read aloud:

"Dear Miss Mason: I tried to see you yesterday afternoon, but your landlady said you had gone home for over Sunday. I hope you are not taking my talk to heart. Most probably you are not, as your disposition seems to be of a marvelously cheerful and elastic type. And, anyway, what's a dandelion or two between friends?"

"Have just come from the board meeting and have the pleasure of reporting your election. I have placed you in the Lafayette School for next year, the grounds of that building being somewhat overrun with certain yellow weeds. You will no doubt take pleasure in assisting the janitor to eradicate them."

"I have just been talking with Keith by phone, and if I do not hear from you that it would be inconvenient, I will drop in with him on Sunday and congratulate you in person on the 'professional hit' you made with the Capitol City superintendent."

"JOHN R. WHEELER."

Marcia threw out her arms to them all. "Folks," she said in a little tense, awe-struck voice, "I was born under a lucky star."

"Land sakes, I believe it!" Father said.

They were all talking at once, after the manner of Masons.

Katherine laughed. "You old fraud, you don't deserve it."

Eleanor's contribution was, "Oh, Marcia, I adore a good profile."

Tillie was saying, "My good land, you do beat the Dutch!"

Junior, at the close of a prodigious yawn, asked unintelligibly, "Wh'd 'e mean, dandelions?"

Only mother said nothing. She was looking at the lovely flushed face of her starry-eyed girl and making a little incoherent prayer, "Dear Lord—keep her happy—like that."

The excitement over, they all went back to their rooms.

"I can't help but be glad she got it," Father was pulling off his sock and tenderly regarding his favorite corn. "But it wasn't a very good lesson for her to have it turn out this way."

Mother was immediately on the other side of the argument. "Oh, she's had punishment enough, father—that's so." Mother brushed her hair for a few moments, and then added, "I must say, though, I don't like that dandelion deal; it's too much like deceiving."

Father, with alacrity, veered to the opposite side. "Oh, I don't know," he said cheerfully; "that's what I call

good old-fashioned Yankee shrewdness." So they went to bed, arguing amiably, quarreling peaceably, as they had done for twenty-six years.

Across the hall, Marcia finished building her hair, turned out the light and snuggled up the shades. Pale, silvery, golden-white, the moon

flooded her slim, youthful figure in its soft, clinging gown. Surreptitiously, deftly, she slipped a large square envelope under her pillow. Then she said, "Kathie, something tells me I'm going to enjoy teaching with John."

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BY

BESS STREETER

ALDRICH.

Lardner Observes

Miami Mermaids

TO the editor: In response to demands from numerous readers will devote my article this wk. to a few more of my ventures in sunny Florida. We left Belleair at 11:42 a.m. bound for sunny Miami via way of sunny Jacksonville.

It was a shorter way of going from Belleair to Miami by cutting across the state but you half to change trains 3 or 4 times and while a person might think that every time you change trains in sunny Florida it could not help from being a improvement, still and all the shoe might be on the other ft.

They was no incidence worth recording en route to Jacksonville except when we past through a city name Newbury and seen a store there

the flamingo for the nominal sum of \$4.00 dollars.

Amongst the 1st people we met was John Golden the play producer and he asked how I was and I says I was O. K. only that my dogs hurt, referring to my ft. So he says maybe your kennels is to small, referring to my shoes. I laughed heartily.

This was our 1st visit to Miami and I suppose my admires is wild to know did I like it better than other points in Florida. Will state that Miami Beach is 1 of the prettiest spots I have ran across and the beach itself is a 100 per cent beach and as far as the costumes and etc. is concerned why the bathing suits wore by the gals at Miami Beach makes the Palm Beach gals look like eskimos.

If the Miami gals wore sex and



"BATHING SUITS WORE BY THE GALS AT MIAMI BEACH MAKES THE PALM BEACH GALS LOOK LIKE ESKIMOS."

which it says on the outside "John G. White, Jeweler, Shoes, hats, notions, furniture and collars."

I says to the Mrs. that it looked to me like Mr. White was making a mistake to not branch out and get a couple side lines like musical instruments and false teeth because the town did not look like it was big enough for a man to specialize.

I said this in a joking way and sure enough she laughed heartily.

We arrived at Jacksonville at 2 p.m. and asked the man what time was they a train for Miami and he says they was a train leaving at 9:40 and another train leaving at 10 o'clock so I says which was the best train and he says "Well the 9:40 is faster but the other stays 20 minutes behind it all the way down."

I thought this was kind of wonderful at the time but all the more so after we had spent the night on the 9:40 and realized what a trick it must of been for the 10 o'clock train to not gain no ground.

While we was getting on the board of the 9:40 at Jacksonville a man come up and spoke to me and who was it but Joe Moeller that use to be a motor cycle cop in old Chi and I might be arrested me for speeding on the west side boulevards.

He got on the 9:40 with us but had no occasion to take the engineer's number.

OFFICER MOELLER said that he shortly after arresting me they had reached Miami to the detective corps and I night they sent him

shoes you would think they was pre- liminary fighters and speaking about the beach was Walter Monaghan who the last time I seen him, he was throwing a used towel in to the middle of a boxing ring at Toledo, O.

Walter is running a physical culture school at the beach which is more money then acting as Willard's spring partner but he has still got faith in old Jess and he says he could of kept on fighting that famous 4 of July only he could not get his eyes open after the 1st rd.

What made Jess so sleepy was lying on his back and looking up at the bright sun. \* \* \* \*

IN regards to the social life at Miami Beach and Palm Beach, why about the only differences is that the high monkey monks at Miami don't seem to carry so many servants along with them. Pretty near everybody at Palm Beach has a personal secretary with them and a lot of visitors to Miami can read and write.

People changes there close 4 times a day at Miami vs. 6 at Palm Beach but I seen 1 costume at Miami Beach that made Palm Beach look like a piker namely a man in a white linen suit and a black derby.

Palm Beach is probably a whole lot more exclusive and personally we wasent flooded with invitations the yr. we was at Palm Beach while in Miami they was never a day when the mail box did not yield cards from chiropractors and etc.

When we reached Miami there was a atmosphere of gloom in the air which it seems the reason for same was a item of news in the Miami papers in regards to the weather in California. It seems the thermometer at San Bernardino the day before had fell to 31 above zero and it looked like the southern California, alond crop would be spoiled. The Miami papers tried to suppress this item by putting it on top of the front page but a whole lot of Miami people seen it and they was not a dry eye in the town.

RING W. LARDNER.

Great Neck, Long Island, March 2.

Tides Predict Storms.

IT has been shown, in the opinion of certain scientists, that West Indian hurricanes and other great storms at sea frequently produce a remarkable effect upon the tides along neighboring coasts.

When a tempest is approaching, or passing out on the ocean, the tides are noticeably higher than usual, as if the water had been driven in a vast wave before the storm. The influence extends to a great distance from the cyclonic storm center, so that the possibility exists of forecasting the approach of a dangerous hurricane by means of indications furnished by the tide gages situated far away from the place then occupied by the whirling winds.

The fact that the tidal wave strips the advancing storm shows how extremely sensitive the surface of the sea is to the changes of pressure brought to bear upon it by the never-resting atmosphere.

A town in Saxony boasts of a guild of hand weavers which has been in continuous existence for more than 400 years.



"A MAN IN A WHITE LINEN SUIT AND A BLACK DERBY."